



February 9, 2007

Dear Members of the Senate Local Government Committee:

We, the undersigned sportsmen organizations representing approximately 10,000 hunters and anglers from across Montana, are writing to express our enthusiastic support for SB 345, the Montana Stream Legacy Act. This measure establishes minimum development setbacks for new development along our state's most cherished rivers and streams. We strongly urge you to also support SB 345.

As you know, hunting and fishing are central to Montana's cultural heritage and pump millions of dollars a year into the state's economy. A larger percentage of Montana's population hunts and fishes than in any other state in the country, even Alaska. According to the most recent figures from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, hunting and fishing had a total economic effect of over \$680 million in 2001 and sustained close to 10,000 jobs. In short, hunting and fishing mean serious business to Montanans.

A fundamental reason why Montana is blessed with some of the best hunting and fishing in the United States is our abundance of intact wildlife habitat and clean water. No fish and wildlife habitat is more important than our riparian areas. These ribbons of life provide crucial habitat for fish, waterfowl, upland birds, and big game animals like deer, elk and moose. Unfortunately, these same areas face unprecedented threats from new residential development. As Governor Schweitzer said last summer, "Development along rivers and streams that destroys protective riparian areas is possibly the single most urgent ecosystem threat facing Montana today."

The good news is there is still time to save our most valuable riparian areas from being overrun by new subdivisions and trophy homes. By passing the Montana Stream Legacy Act, we can get ahead of the curve and maintain our world-class hunting and fishing while also allowing streamside property owners to continue reasonable use of their land. But time is running out. If we want our children and grandchildren to enjoy the same opportunities to hunt and fish that we have, we must act now.

As our elected leaders, you have a golden opportunity to leave a legacy that future generations will forever be thankful for. As the leading sportsmen organizations in Montana, we urge you to seize it. Vote for SB 345, the Montana Stream Legacy Act.

Sincerely,

Montana Trout Unlimited

Bitter Root Chapter  
Big Blackfoot Chapter  
Flathead Valley Chapter  
George Grant Chapter  
Joe Brooks Chapter  
Kootenai Valley Chapter  
Lewis and Clark Chapter  
Madison-Gallatin Chapter  
Magic City Fly Fishers  
Pat Barnes-Missouri River Chapter  
Snowy Mountain Chapter  
West Slope Chapter

Montana Wildlife Federation

Federation of Fly Fishers